DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 193 687 CS 205 957

AUTHOR Snyder, Sandra L.
TITLE How Well Do Prospective Teachers Speak?
PUB DATE Oct 80
NOTE 6p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English (Allentown, PA, October 24-25, 1980). For related documents see CS 205 954-957.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Basic Skills: *Communication Skills: Educational Assessment: *Educational Research: English Teacher Education: Higher Education: *Preservice Teacher Education: *Secondary School Teachers: *Speech Communication: Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

As part of a study of basic skills of secondary education students, a study was conducted at Pennsylvania State University of the speaking ability of 43 prospective secondary level teachers. A rating instrument was developed based on a list of criteria considered important to teachers by speech communication experts and teacher educators alike. Five areas--organization and development, adaption to audience, language usage, ability to motivate, and delivery--were considered. Results of the speech data analysis revealed no significant differences between performance of the two sexes. The mean score on the 100 point scale was 73.98, while the mean score on the holistic scale on the overall impression scale was 3.00, indicating an acceptable performance. However, seven of the 43 subjects evidenced a need for further diagnosis and instruction in oral communication skills. (MKM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sandra L. Snyder
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED193687

How Well Do Prospective Teachers Speak?

Sandra L. Snyder
The Pennsylvania State University

Background

In recent years, public schools and their teachers have come under fire for the failure to produce high school graduates who are competent in the basic communication skills (most often identified as reading, writing and arithmetic). To some of us, the mention of competence in speaking is conspicuously absent from most references to communication skills. If teachers are going to be held accountable for their students' ability to communicate, it makes sense to assume that the role of teachers as models of good communication practices is an essential part of their task. The most visible and frequent modeling of communication that occurs in the classroom is oral communication.

A review of the professional literature addressing the issue of teacher effectiveness reveals a general agreement among educators that one of the important factors contributing to effective teaching is that teachers be competent communicators. In spite of this observation, very few teacher education programs include the assessment of, or instruction in, communication skills.

The concern for communicative competence in the teaching profession has been vocalized more frequently in the field of speech communication than in education. Phillips, Butt, and Metzger (1974) devoted an entire book to the topic. Nyquist and Booth (1975, 1977) express concern and describe a course in instructional communication that could be offered in teacher education programs. The rationale for such a course is based on their conviction that

CS205957

"teachers must explain programs and concepts, give directions, establish relationships, elicit student responses, resolve conflict, and in general, facilitate an open, stimulating exchange of ideas between all members of an educational community" (1977, p. 13).

Procedures

In order to answer the question, "How well do prospective teachers speak?" it became apparent that it would first be necessary to develop a rating instrument specifically designed to evaluate those aspects of oral communication that are unique to the teaching process. Prior to my investigation, validated speech rating scales were primarily prepared for the purpose of providing consistency among speech ratings within college speech communication courses.

The procedure I employed in developing a rating instrument began with the compilation of a list of criteria deemed important by speech communication experts and teacher educators alike. The research of Gundersen and Hopper (1976) and Gundersen (1978) demonstrates the importance of relating items on a rating scale with specific objectives to achieve maximum reliability.

The list was then collapsed into five major areas for assessing formal speaking presentations. The formal speaking situation was chosen as the means of assessment because it allows for a time-efficient procedure while attending to the speaker's ability to convey a meaningful message.

Arranging the five areas into a hierarchy constituted the next stage of development. While the hierarchy is very similar to many speech rating scales, the distribution of points on the scale differs significantly from previously developed scales. The area labeled "adaptation to the listener's needs," is given more weight than on most other scales.

Each of the five areas (organization and development, adaptation to audience, language usage, ability to motivate, and delivery) is accompanied by a checklist describing specific components. The number of check marks convert to a numerical scale that ranges from 1 (poor performance) to 4 (very good) for each of the five areas. The weighting of each area is achieved by multiplying the score (1 to 4) by increasingly larger numbers from the bottom of the hierarchy to the top. The maximum total of the entire scale is 100 points.

A sixth factor on the scale (overall impression) provides for a holistic evaluation of the speech. This was included in order to test the correlation of a holistic evaluation with the more specific evaluation. The intention of acquiring this information was to determine if a holistic measure would suffice for the purpose of screening potential teachers on the basis of speaking ability.

Validation and Reliability

The instrument was validated through its use in rating the speaking performances of 43 prospective, secondary level teachers at The Pennsylvania State University. Content validity was demonstrated by delineating sets of objectives for each area of the scale. The objectives were based on the work of experts as described in the research literature.

Interrater reliability was tested by, first, training three teacher educators in the use of the scale and, then, compiling the ratings of the three trainees and the investigator that were achieved in a session rating 20 video-taped speeches randomly selected from a sample of 43. The use of a rank-order correlation coefficient (Winer, 1964) in analyzing the data resulted in an overall correlation of .92.

Having established both the validity and reliability of the scale, it was then possible to use the scale to get an assessment of the speaking ability of the 43 subjects. The variables of sex and subject-area emphases were analyzed to determine, first, if there was a significant difference in the performances of males and females and, second, if there was a significant difference in the performances of students majoring in different content areas (English, mathematics, science, or social studies). A third area of analysis was a test to measure how well the holistic ratings correlated with the more specific features of the entire scale.

Results

Results of the speech data analysis revaled no significant difference ($p < .05$) between performances of the two sexes. There was also no significant difference among subjects majoring in the four content areas.

An acceptable correlation (.77) between scores using the holistic evaluation and scores using the more detailed scale supports the possibility of the use of the holistic scale alone for screening purposes.

In answer to the question "How well do Penn State's prospective teachers speak?" based on the use of this scale, they apparently do quite well. Had the holistic scale been employed with this group of subjects for screening purposes, seven of the 43 subjects (those scoring 1 or 2) would have been screened out for further diagnosis and instruction in oral communication skills. The mean score on the holistic scale was 3.00, indicating an acceptable performance. The mean score on the 100 point scale was 73.98.

Further research and use of the scale with another set of trained raters and a larger number of subjects will further test the reliability of the instrument.

References

Gundersen, D. F. Video-tape modules as a device for training speech raters. The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 1978, 43, 395-406.

Gundersen, D. F. and Hopper, R. Relationships between speech delivery and speech effectiveness. Communications Monographs, 1976, 43, 158-165.

Nyquist, J. L. and Booth, J. L. Instructional communication: a basic course for teachers. Communication Education, 1977, 26, 13-26.

Phillips, G., Butt, D., and Metzger, N. Communication in education: a rhetoric of schooling. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974.

Winer, B. J. Statistical principles in experimental design. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962, 130-131.